

Epidemiologic Word of the Week:

PREVALENCE RATE

The proportion of persons in a population who have a particular disease or attribute at a specified point in time or over a specified period of time.

Functionally, the number of individuals with a particular disease, condition, or attribute existing in a specified population during a particular time period.

Provides an estimate of disease burden within a specified population.

Equation:

Prevalence = (persons having a particular attribute during a given time period/ population during the same time period) $\times 10^n$

The value of 10^n is usually 1 or 100 for common attributes. The value of 10^n may be 1,000, 100,000, or even 1,000,000 for rare traits and for most diseases.

Example:

According to the CDC, the overall prevalence of cerebral palsy [in the United States] was 3.6 per 1,000 in 1996 and 3.1 per 1,000 in 2000.

From: MMWR. Jan 2006;55(SS-1);1.